

# THE MIDLAND

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## TUTANKHAMEN

By WILLIAM ELLERY LEONARD

Being a king of Egypt, he had found  
Egyptian silence in the rock-hewn hill,  
Too deep for rain that patters on the ground,  
Or shrieking wind that shimmers where it will;  
Chambered he slept as far from lightning-shaft  
As creak of water-wheel . . . deep, dark, and still. . .  
For Egypt, in her stern, huge handicraft,  
Had made even Silence an Invincible. . . .  
But over Nile a blast of light there broke  
From lands upbuilt of Egypt's bones and shrines,  
Glinting old seas, unbeaconed then, uncut;  
And life's new sounds assailed him, with red smoke  
Whirled on the sirens of the mills and mines,  
While San Francisco's newsboys cried, "King Tut!"

Estranging Time that bilks us of our best  
Now cleaves us from what sanctities we save:  
Had he but yesterday been laid to rest,  
What prowling hands had dared ransack his grave?  
For we that torture life still guard the dead;  
Even flowers we spare, and sod is shovelproof;  
Not the fierce Norseman dug his foe from bed,  
Unless the grim ghost walked or rode the roof.  
But this sarcophagus in Pharaoh's tomb  
We now unlid, and show, black, shrivelled, taut,

The very face upturned of one to whom  
Death had peculiar subtilty for thought —  
So long ago his duties, joys, and doom,  
The curio's all in all, the man is naught.

So long ago? — Mirror his collarette;  
Give your young child his childhood glove to fondle;  
Trouble this bowl with rose or violet,  
This alabaster bowl of lotus-handle;  
Mull, with his ivory cane, by Thames or Po;  
Hum to those strings a song of love or flowers:  
Ours are his modes and moods of life — although  
His hope to conquer death was more than ours.  
So long ago? — The bisons, carved by man,  
Uncavern a hollow laughter down the gale  
From Altamira and from Montespan;  
While the shag Spectre in Neanderdale,  
Towering behind the Magdalenian,  
Makes us and Egypt but a single tale.

A tale begun — to end. . . . So long ago? . . .  
We count from bud to frost, from seed to crop,  
Not from the pot-hole on the mountain-top  
To stream that scooped it, now so far below.  
We calendar vast Time by fall of states  
Or birth of gods, — yet from the rocks we bore,  
By Gobi's dunes, the eggs of Dinosaur,  
The year we found this king behind the gates.  
Builders of house and hedge, a race we are  
Between the Ice-to-come and Ice forspent,  
Who plant a lava-field or ocean-bed;  
We coal our engines under many a star  
Whose blaze had started down the firmament  
Before the boy Tutankhamen was bred.

So earth and starlight bring him, heart and home,  
Near as lost faces dreams reveal unbid;  
Even though between his roads by pyramid,  
Pylon, and sphinx and ours by spire and dome,  
Between great Karnak and great aerodrome,  
Between his rent Papyrus-of-the-Dead  
And all the Liturgies that now be read,  
Lies that wide ridge — debris of Greece and Rome.  
The skirted, big-eyed Blacks with grip on mace  
Stood guard not well. We came, we saw, we took. . . .  
But nearer than earth can bring him or abyss,  
Art, man's one surety over Time and Place,  
Will bring him yet. . . . Lay by your hates, and look,  
O World, where Beauty is your armistice:

The panel of his coronation throne  
Here gleams with glass, faience, and sheeted gold,  
And lapis lazuli, immortal stone;  
Showing (by boss and inlay) as of old:  
The palace hall, the pillars hung with flowers,  
And frieze of royal cobras, while the sun  
Through opened ceilings sends the morning hours,  
As God of Egypt and of Ikhnaton.  
Here sits Tutankhamen in cushioned chair,  
His elbow on its back, a palm on knee,  
Relaxed from Hunt and Sacrifice and War;  
While his unwidowed queen, in hooded hair,  
From unguent-cup anoints confidingly  
His tawny shoulder with her fingers four.

NOTE. — "As God of Egypt and of Ikhnaton": the line is not rhetoric but history; for the solar disk dominating the panel proves that Tutankhamen was not the renegade we had supposed from the sun-worship of the monotheist reformer, his father-in-law Ikhnaton (Amenhotep IV).

## THE LATE JOSEPH WEST

By ROLAND ENGLISH HARTLEY

It was Uncle Ned's funeral that had given him the idea — or rather, Sallie's report of it. He himself, of course, had not been able to go. If the very walk down-town was something to be undertaken only seldom and deliberately, how could he think of a day-long trip to Centerville, followed by the eating of strange meals and the sleeping in a strange bed? But he had thought of it. He had even approached Doctor Brunner on the subject; and the doctor, in that loud way of his, had shouted, "Yes, go on; go right on over; and they can bury you too while they're at it."

So Sallie had gone alone, leaving him for three days in the care of Anna from across the street. It was their first separation in all these years since the warning had first come from his heart. Returning to him, she seemed to come out of a remote past, and all the wealth of talk that she brought back with her was the gleanings of richer, fuller days.

They had all been there at Uncle Ned's — all the people that inhabited Joseph West's world of memory. And Sallie, sitting across the table from him, with the lamp pushed back from between them, and its soft light caught in her white hair as she bent forward over her darning — Sallie brought them all back to him into this quiet room.

"We all kept saying," she reported, "what a shame it was that Uncle Ned couldn't *see* them all. Some of them hadn't been there for years, and I guess he'd *never* seen 'em all together that way."

"Yes, that's the way it goes," he agreed in a low voice; and when she looked up to him quickly, he hastened to ask something more about his cousin Will.

Will, so Sallie reported, had talked much of the hunting trips that he and Joe once had together. "He says



he's always planning to get up to see you, only Oakvale seems so far away. This is a kind of a stuck-away place," Sallie declared. "Lands, I never knew how far from everywhere it *was* till I had to keep changing cars, changing cars, all day!"

And so the talk went on, as one by one she summoned before him the figures of the past that still peopled his empty present. There was one name that was not mentioned, yet it flew constantly back and forth between them. The avoidance of it in speech repeatedly brought little moments of constraint. Finally, breaking into one of these pauses that was heavy with unspoken words, Joseph asked slowly, "And John — how was he?"

Sallie reached across to lay her hand upon his that rested on the colored cloth. "Your brother's all right, Joe; but he looks so hard, hard." Their eyes held together for a long minute before she withdrew her hand. Then he asked, "Was his wife there?"

"No, she wasn't. . . . I guess you were right about her, Joe. Nobody had much to say about her, and of course I couldn't ask. But if any of 'em had been very friendly with her, I'd have heard *something* about her."

After a long pause, he said, "Poor John!"

She flared up at this. "Well, I can't say I sympathize with him very much. Not after the way he treated you."

"I don't blame him for that, Sallie. You know I wrote and told him I didn't blame him."

She had a brief little sniff for this. "And lots of good it did!"

"No," he admitted; "but I didn't expect him to answer."

They hadn't talked of this for years. It was the one subject that resisted their intimacy. Sallie knew that it hurt him to talk of it, and she tried now to draw away. But all this dipping into the past had made the quarrel with his brother a very present fact to him, and tonight there was a relief in speaking of it.

"I guess I shouldn't have ever said anything to him about it. After all, it's a man's own business who he marries. But I thought I was doing what was right. John had always been such a sort of solitary creature. And of course, being away so much, he wouldn't know what people said about — about *her*."

"Of course you had to tell him," Sallie declared. "And if he'd had any sense, he'd have listened to you, instead of getting on that high horse of his. I guess he's sorry enough now."

"I wish I hadn't said anything about it," her husband repeated gently.

She turned the talk deftly to some other figure out of the past, and soon she had him laughing quietly again at her vigorous portrayals. The whole long evening was not enough for the mining of these rich new veins of narrative. On the next night Sallie went back to it, beginning with repetitions that he asked for and going on with countless new presentations of this re-animated past.

There was a nervous quality, she noticed, in Joseph's listening — not the deep receptiveness of last night. Sometimes he seemed not to pay a particle of attention when she answered his questions. She thought he was brooding again over the estrangement from his brother; and she tried to divert his mind with a fullness of lively detail.

At length he pulled his chair around to the table and leaned toward her. In his voice she caught the flutter of his nervous breathing. "Sallie, I wonder if it would be all right if we told 'em I was dead, so they'd come up here."

"Well, land's sakes, Joe —," she burst out. She couldn't say more until she had had a good look at him, and the bow of her spectacles catching in a loop of hair above her ear, he had an opportunity of explaining further while she was fussing with the disentanglement.

"I've been thinking how much I'd like to see those folks. And I can't expect 'em to come up here any other way. It's too far off, like you said. But" — he gave a nervous little laugh — "I know it sounds funny; but do you think it'd be wrong, Sallie?"

She had her glasses in her hand now and held them out on the table before her as she looked solemnly across at him.

"I'll write and ask 'em all to come, Joe," she said at length. "I'll tell 'em you want to see 'em."

He made an impatient movement in his chair. "They wouldn't come that way, Sallie. Maybe one or two might. But most of 'em would just say they'd come some other time, and they'd put it off, and put it off, and not come at all. And I'd like to see 'em all, Sallie."

Still she continued to stare at him in silence while the implications of this amazing idea opened out before her.

"We'd have to tell 'em," her husband went on pleadingly, "that we — you wouldn't expect 'em to come when I was really gone. It wouldn't be fair, else."

She sat up suddenly in her chair as if her mind had just returned from great distances with a decision.

"No, Joe," she said. "We couldn't do anything like that. It don't sound — well, religious, quite."

But he went on with his pleading, half jestingly, half wistfully. When the tears began to gleam in her eyes, he urged, "Now, Sallie, you mustn't take it that way. Why, I think it would be lots of fun. I've been thinking about it all day. I don't see what's wrong about it, Sallie. I guess I'd be the first man that ever enjoyed his own funeral," he ended with a desperate attempt to bring her to an appreciation of the whimsicality of the idea.

But she kept shaking her head and murmuring, "It seems wrong, somehow. I don't know, but it seems kind of — wrong, somehow."

"They wouldn't mind, Sallie," he went on urging.

"When they got here and found how it was, they wouldn't mind. I don't see how I can ever see 'em any other way. And I — my day might come any time."

At this she got up and came around the table to rest her hand on his head. He assured her hastily, "Doc Brunner says I might keep on going for years yet. But anyhow —."

"We'll think about it, Joe," she said, and sat on the arm of his chair, leaning against his shoulder and running her fingers through his hair.

She hoped that the fancy would have passed by morning, but when she woke, Joe was sitting up in bed beside her, waiting to ask, "When shall we have my funeral, Sallie?"

She made no further effort of opposition. It had been years since he had wanted anything as he wanted this. She hid away her little scruples and hesitations and met him in full acceptance of the plan. The practical problems of the preparation soon took from her the last lingering doubts.

For it wasn't going to be such a simple matter, the housing and entertaining of these people who were to be summoned to obsequies and held at a festival. All the unused rooms of the house had to be made ready for a brief but critical tenancy.

When Joseph remonstrated with her, time after time, "Why don't you just let things go, Sallie? Everything don't have to be just so" — she answered stoutly, "Everything *does* have to be just so. You think I want all those women going away to talk about what a poor housekeeper I am?"

But it bothered Joseph, her ceaseless activity. From his chair in the living-room he could see her passing up and down the stairway, laden with pitchers and basins and linen for the beds. After he had called to her several times, "Don't get too tired, Sallie," and had had only

the briefest of answers, he would struggle free from the soft grip of the cushions and make his slow way upstairs. Standing at a bedroom door, he might see her through a haze of dust, her cheeks glowing under the white kerchief that bound her hair; and she would wave the broom at him and demand, "What's the matter now, Joe?"

And he would explain, "I don't like to see you having to do all these extra things, just on account of my notion."

"It's about *time* these rooms were getting a going-over," she would insist. "Now you go right back where you came from."

But it hurt him not to be helpful. He would go prowling about in the upstairs rooms, looking for some little tasks in which he might forestall her. As often as she caught him in these furtive activities, she would face him with her hands on her hips and declare, "Well, Joe, you stay put about as good as a terrier pup."

One day she came upon him just as he had been trying to move the heavy bureau in the south bedroom over a faded spot in the carpet. He was leaning against the wall in the corner, panting. When she got him back to his chair she said, "Can't you see, Joe, that it would be a lot easier for me if I didn't have to worry about your puttering around this way?"

After that, he tried to be quiet, but it was very hard when he saw the lines of weariness deepening beneath her eyes.

As the time drew nearer, he was assailed by those doubts which he had first of all conquered in her. And now it was her turn to reassure and comfort, as if the suggestion and the idea had originally been her own.

His gravest anxiety was as to how his brother would take it. "I'm afraid he'll think it was just a trick to win his sympathy," he said.

"Nonsense. He'll be so happy when he finds you're really here that he won't think about anything like that."

"He'll really come, don't you think, Sallie?" he begged.

"Of course he'll come." But she looked away as she said it.

Perhaps the full sense of what they were doing did not come to them until the day when they were to send out the letters and telegrams announcing the death of Joseph West. They sat staring dumbly at the heap of ready envelopes on the table.

"I don't know, Joe," she breathed at last. "It seems almost like flying in the face of Providence."

He was balancing the letter addressed to his brother across his finger-tips. "Maybe we'd better not," he answered slowly.

But she saw the lines of disappointment form about his mouth as he waited for her response. With a heavy sigh she gathered up the scattered stack of letters. "It'll be all right," she said. And then, to offset the hesitant tone, she set herself in determined motion. "A nice thing for me to be loafing like this with all those cookies to be cut out!" She bent over him with a kiss of reassurance; but in the kitchen she leaned for a few moments against the closed door, with shut eyes.

Responses to the messages that had gone out came suddenly, and from an unexpected quarter. She and Joe hadn't foreseen that the news, in a few hours, would spread all over town from the telegraph office. Shocked neighbors appeared at the door even before noon; and the explanation proved surprisingly difficult. In a few minutes of hurried talk it wasn't possible to convey the full meaning of the plan; and the bald statement that it was a "joke" was an assault upon the local sense of propriety. Joe had to make frequent appearances on the porch to assure visitors of his continued existence. It was in vain that Sallie tried to save him the strain of these encounters; he, on his part, was determined to relieve her of the burden of explanation. He was growing

very nervous over it all; a mounting excitement took the place of his anxieties; he went back to the whimsical jesting mood of the first days.

"I never had any idea dying was such a nuisance," he complained after they had sent away two relieved but bewildered visitors.

The next morning brought him another aspect of discomfort. With the early mail came several responses to the summons, from those who would be unable to come. From these letters Sallie insisted upon reading him extracts, while he squirmed in his chair.

"Now that's enough, Sallie," he pleaded. "It don't seem fair. They wouldn't say all those things about me if they knew I was alive."

"That's the trouble with folks," she declared; "saving up all their kind remarks for tombstones!"

And Joseph West had to hear what a devoted friend he had been, what a sterling man.

It was possible that some one might arrive this very afternoon, and Joseph's restlessness increased with the passing hours. All his wife's efforts to keep him still were unavailing; he moved ceaselessly from the living-room to the porch, down to the garden gate, back to the porch. She would have stayed beside him to enforce quiet if her work in the kitchen with Anna had allowed any but the scantiest opportunities of escape.

But no one came that afternoon. And they were all ready now: they had an evening which might have been restful but for the nervousness of apprehension that held them both. Even in the night, Sallie heard her husband moving restlessly beside her. Once or twice she woke to find him sitting up.

"Your heart bothering you, Joe?" she asked.

But he said No; he just couldn't sleep.

They were out in the garden early, cutting roses for the mantel-piece. Joseph sniffed the fragrant morning air happily.

"I guess nobody ever had a better day for a funeral," he declared.

But the approaching anxieties still hemmed-about the approaching joys. "When they come," he said, "I hope some of the others get here before John. It'll be easier to make him understand, that way. I wouldn't want him to think that it was just him I was fooling."

Again after breakfast they were out in the garden, with no purpose now, but only a dim desire to go a little way toward those who were coming. Long before it stopped at their corner, they saw the bus that met the main-line trains at the Junction. Sallie heard her husband breathing quickly beside her. His fingers were trembling on her arm.

"You go down to the gate, Sallie," he begged. "I'll wait here." And he sank back limply onto the stairs. "If it's John —," he whispered hoarsely as she moved away; but when she turned, he only waved a hand dubiously. She went on down the path toward the gate.

The bus had left one passenger and gone on. A slight little woman was hesitating before the gate. Sallie did not know her. Under a great rolled mass of hair that held her hat too high above her face, dark, deep-set eyes looked out hungrily. When Sallie opened the gate, she asked the stranger, "Were you looking for some one?"

The woman said, "I'm Cora. John's wife."

Sallie said, "Oh," and swung the gate wider.

"John — he was very busy — he couldn't —." And then she caught Sallie's hand between hers and held it for a moment.

They walked slowly up the path together, in silence. Once past the bend by the cherry tree, they would see Joseph on the steps; but Sallie found it impossible to speak of this. He was standing when they came in sight of him. The woman, John's wife, halted for just the slightest instant, then went forward more quickly.



"You see," Sallie called to her, "we just wanted — Joseph wanted to see you all."

And then she saw her husband's hand fluttering at his breast and ran forward to put her arm about him.

The woman was facing him with her wan smile.

"Maybe you don't remember me," she said.

"Yes," he panted. "Yes. I thought I —. You're Cora."

"John —," she began.

"Yes, yes. I know."

"He — wanted to come."

"He *would* come? Then he *will* come some other time?"

"Yes; he'll come," she promised.

Sallie had her finger-tips on her husband's wrist. "You've got to rest now, Joe," she ordered. "Cora will excuse you for a little while. He gets just as excited over this as a youngster over a circus," she explained brightly to the little woman, who nodded slowly.

As she wrapped the rug over Joseph's thighs in the high-backed chair, he was murmuring, "Just to think of *her* coming! And John — he'd come if he could. I'll have to talk with her pretty soon, Sallie. Before the others come. There's so much —."

She broke into his nervous speech with an order for silence, and when he shut his eyes and let his head sink among the pillows, she hurried out to John's wife.

She felt that some further explanation had to be made. "It must seem funny," she began. "We just —."

"Oh, I know," the little woman put in. "I knew as soon as I saw him. I understand what it is to need people."

Sallie found that it was impossible to meet the ardent demands of her eyes. She felt as if she had injured this woman, and it would be easier to be accused than forgiven.

"I must tell you —," John's wife was saying, and pulling at her arm so that they were moving farther from the house. "John wouldn't come. I had the hardest time getting him to let me. . . . But he's got to come. I'm going to send for him. I saw how disappointed Joseph was. And while you were inside I was thinking: I'll send him a telegram. I won't tell him just how things are; I *couldn't* in a telegram. So I'll just say: 'I want you to come at once.' Something like that. And he ought to be here by tonight."

"It would make Joe very happy," Sallie said. Since she couldn't leave her husband, she pointed out the way down the street to the telegraph office.

Joseph was much calmer by the time of Cora's return. She came to him in the living-room.

"I've sent for John," she told him. "He'll be here tonight."

He held out a hand to her. Sallie, after admonishing her, "Don't let him wear himself out talking," left them alone together.

"It was good of *you* to come," he began. "I didn't expect —."

"Of course I'd come," she broke in. "I've been trying for a long time to get John to bring me up here. I wanted you to see how I'd changed since those days when I waited on your table. But John's been pretty bitter."

"Yes," he said. "I don't blame him. I made a great mistake."

"We never talk about your quarrel," she went on earnestly. "He never even told me what it was about. But of course I knew. It couldn't have been anything else, coming just then. And I've tried to let him see that I didn't blame you for anything you might have said. Any girl who works around a hotel, waiting on a lot of men, gets talked about. And I tried to make John see that if you'd been wrong, you ought to know it. But I couldn't do anything with him."

"I wrote once and told him I guessed I had been wrong."

"Did you? I never knew."

"And when he didn't pay any attention, I thought maybe after all I had been right; and then of course, I couldn't have kept on reminding him of *that*. . . . I've thought about it a lot. . . . More than anything else."

"But now it's going to be all right," she reminded him.

With a deep sigh he let himself back into the depths of the chair.

"He'll be here tonight," John's wife said again.

They heard loud talking in the garden. When laughter came with it, Cora said, "Sallie's told them." And then Fred Walsh and his sister were ushered in.

Fred's wide mouth let out its usual booming. "Well, you're a mighty sry-looking dead one!"

While he was still elaborating this idea, there was another chorus of voices from before the house, and another inroad of visitors. Dave Parker's little boy and girl hung back doubtfully at the threshold. The solemnity that had been urgently demanded of them failed to yield at once to this strange hilarity. Finally Joseph enticed little Margaret to his side. From the circle of his arm she looked about with mystified eyes that besought the explanation of all this queer behavior.

When the Judge came there was a moment of tension. The Judge was one who did not lightly countenance infringements upon the literal truth. He took his place stiffly on a chair against the wall and scowled across at Joseph.

At last Joseph rallied him. "You look as if you'd rather have me really dead, Judge."

The Judge held up a hand in protest. "I have been thinking how shameful it is that we have had to be summoned in this manner to a friend."

Out of the chorus of approval rose Tommie Parker's piping voice, "What did he say, ma?"

And still they continued to come, these crowding figures out of Joseph West's past. At the picnic lunch on the porch there gathered about him at least twenty friends who for years had been only names. And it was understood that this meeting was no more than a prelude to the festival planned for the evening. "My brother John will be here then," Joseph told them happily and proudly.

Soon after lunch, Sallie insisted upon his going apart for a rest. He had begun to look very weary under the nervous stresses of the day. She felt a great deal of his weight on her arm as she walked upstairs with him. In their bedroom, as she loosened his shoes to save him from stooping, she said, "Well, did it turn out like you wanted, Joe?"

She felt his hand on her hair and when she looked up his eyes were full of tears.

"It's been the happiest day I ever had, Sallie — except our wedding day."

While she drew the shades to darken the room, his voice came over to her from the bed. "I don't know if I can sleep, Sallie. Thinking about John's coming — it makes me feel more like singing and shouting than sleeping."

"You just try to sleep a little," she urged as she bent over to kiss his pale face against the pillow. "You'll feel that much better when he comes."

He held her hands a moment and she leaned over to kiss him again.

He did sleep. After an hour she opened quietly the door of the darkened room and heard his slow breathing. Several times through the afternoon, whenever she could get away a minute from the crowding tasks in the kitchen, she hurried upstairs to peep in the slightly-opened door; and always he was lying there asleep, the dim light just showing his shut eyes.

At five o'clock she thought she had better call him. It would be best for him not to have to hurry too much in dressing for dinner. Out of the habit of quiet in the room with a sleeper, she tiptoed across the floor to raise the shades. The evening light flooded into the room. When she turned to the bed, she moved forward with a low cry. She caught at Joe's hand that lay across his breast. It was heavy and very cold. She moved dizzily toward the door, moaning. But when a burst of laughter came up to her from the hall below, she turned back to the bed, and knelt beside it. . . .

Some one knocked at the door. The hallway was dusky when she stepped out, shutting the door behind her. John's wife was standing there with a slip of paper in her hand.

"Sallie," she said. "This just came. I feel terribly about it."

When she saw the tears on Sallie's cheeks, she said, "I know. I know. But I thought surely he'd come. And all he says is: 'Don't expect me.' " She put an arm about Sallie's waist and drew her close. "Sallie," she murmured, "how can we possibly tell him?"

Sallie West opened the door gently. She took John's wife by the hand and led her into the room.

## FOUR POEMS

By GWENDOLEN HASTE

### THE WESTERN WINDOW

The purple grey mountains are rimmed with fire,  
Fire that drops down into the west.  
Mountains clear and dark and far off —  
Mountains in Spain —  
Songs and swords and black lean men sailing over the  
edge of the ocean,  
Watching the light of the rose gold sky.

The gold red rim blazes.  
There's a little cloud —  
Bright gold on bright blue.  
It's a gold island  
In a blue sea.  
Atlantis glitters above the high peaks.  
Soon it will be sucked down —  
Down — down —  
There will be only bands of blue light  
And smoke rose cloud.

. . . . .

They must have watched the sunset,  
Those earlier ones.  
The wheels of their wagons creaked behind the oxen.  
The trail twisted on beside the twisting river.  
The mountains were so tall,  
Grey purple across the valley,  
Shining in the morning,  
But heavy and savage at night.

Peter the cowpuncher  
When he was young

Watched the white-covered wagons move  
Hunting the sunset.  
Now he is old  
And the smooth graveled road  
Runs only to Billings, Park City and Laurel.

. . . . .

Winter has gone.  
The valley land is brown and sweet.  
Only on the hills beyond the river  
Lie the last thin snows of spring.  
Winter wheat in square patches of green  
Checkers the sleeping land.  
Soon the pasque flower will bloom on the grey benches  
Opening delicate mauve petals to the chill sky.

. . . . .

There was one  
Who felt but with the heart of the tribe.  
Through days beside the deep churning river  
She bent her head to tasks about the cave.  
Life surged in her  
Only as the storm blackened  
Or dark chattering enemies slipped along the beaches.  
Yet on an April evening  
When the light burned behind the purple peaks  
Her eyes gleamed with the setting sun,  
And around her other eyes  
Dimly responded  
To the distance  
And a new land  
And green pastures.

. . . . .

The dry weeds rise above the short rough grass.  
They move stiffly in the little evening breeze.  
Last spring they were tender and crowned with flowers,

The bees circled around them  
Deserting the garden for their sweetness.  
See them  
Creaking and dry —  
Life has rolled on.

When I die  
Shall my body lie still  
Or will it rise at the voice of the northeast wind  
And join the mountains  
In their solemn dance  
Before the splendor of God?

. . . . .

The seasons swing.  
Soon these days of rain and bitter winds will go.  
Red-winged blackbirds will be busy in the cat tails.  
Killdeers will mourn pleasantly in the bunch grass.  
Why should I see further than the cottonwoods beside the  
water?  
Stone-covered hills are hard on the contented spirit  
And purple snow-streaked mountains should be covered  
decently from inquiring eyes.

. . . . .

High  
Overhead  
The traveling birds go by.  
But I  
Can fly  
No further than that hill against the sky.

. . . . .

Evening drops.  
The purple mountains smoulder,  
The light behind their peaks grows faint and dies.  
Oh April days  
Grow swiftly older!



## SONG OF THE DRIVER

(TO BE SUNG BY AN OLD MAN WITH BLUE EYES AND HEAVY  
WHITE BROWS AND TREMBLING PURPLE-VEINED HANDS)

I sing of the Long Road,  
The creaking covered wagons, the deceiving ford, the  
monotonous day by day riding.

I sing of purple alder stems at the stream side,  
Pines black and singing on the slopes of mountains,  
Indian paint brush flaming up the hills.  
Bitter root sweet and pink in the early summer,  
Wild roses fragrant in the bottoms.

I sing of buffalo black along the prairies,  
Young deer in the spring,  
Jack rabbits leaping before the advance of the hunter,  
Sage hens hidden in the dark green coulees,  
Antelope far off among the cedars.

I sing of Cold Winters,  
Of the wind from the east whirling dry snow upon the  
floor of the cabin,  
Of black noses outside the thin door,  
Of deep piled drifts and dead cattle and of prayers for  
Spring.

I sing of Women,  
Of weary labor alone under vast skies,  
Of child bearing in the wilderness,  
And of small graves among the pines on the hills,  
Of bitter yearning for catalpa shadowed streets and  
pleasant green-shuttered houses,  
Of old age thin and ugly in a bare land.

I sing of Fields,  
Of winter wheat lying green in the spring,  
Of wheat golden and bending in the wind,  
And alfalfa purple in the summer,  
Of water spilling through tree-shaded ditches,  
Of blooming gardens,  
Of white houses and red barns.

I sing of the Future,  
Of black smoke-belching cities,  
Of interlacing roads,  
Of wide farms,  
Of schools and many children.  
I sing of villages and cross-road stores.  
I sing of a huge angry brown land subdued by the hands  
of man.

. . . . .

This is the song of the driver,  
The stern seeker after freedom,  
Who harnessed a wild land  
And lives old and trembling today in the midst of bond-  
age.

#### GOD SHALL REPAY

Old Mrs. Rogers lives down by the track  
With cinders piled high round her funny little shack,  
And weeds growing rank on what once was a lawn.  
She talks of the days that are gone —

She says:

Farming was terrible hard work.  
Storms was bad and we was pestered by critters.

She says:

No doctor nearer than sixty miles.  
I nearly died of lung fever that first year.

She says:

We had to chase across country because of Indian  
scares  
I got so I didn't sleep good.

She says:

I buried six children down on the flat.  
This was a bad country for little children.

Old Mrs. Rogers sits down by her door  
And she listens to the rattle of the city, and the roar  
Of the trucks and the cars and the engine digging down  
To build a great hospital in our thriving town.

### BIRTHRIGHT

Her father's father was a pioneer,  
And back of him his fathers broke the sod  
On stony meadows consecrate to God;  
Daughter of kings, her lineage runs clear.  
For heritage they gave her strength to toil  
And set a steady light within her eyes;  
Reality does not shock her nor surprise.  
She is maternal as the fecund soil.  
Her close familiars are death and birth  
And the long wheel of winter and of spring.  
She knows the sturdy medicine of mirth;  
She knows the peace the treading years can bring.  
She is as changeless as the far blue haze  
Rimming the wide horizon of her days.

## THE SKETCH BOOK

EDITOR'S NOTE.—This department, of narrative sketches and informal essays, was introduced as a feature of *THE MIDLAND* in 1922, and will appear from time to time.

### FOR RENT — AN OLD-FASHIONED HOUSE

By LIDA PATRICK WILSON

The tenants next door had left. The huge moving van drawn by three powerful horses abreast, had backed up to the curb, and an amazing jumble of tables, pots, pans, pictures, china, and stoves had been piled inside. Even the tiny porch in the rear of the wagon was filled with an overflow of household goods, roped in to prevent them from spilling into the street. A gas range perched perilously near the edge, and two kitchen chairs clung recklessly to the rope as if they had sprinted on their brown wooden legs, and like adventurous boys, jumped onto the moving van. The two little girls had walked off importantly, one carrying a rebellious cat, the other, a precious but hideous hand-painted plaque. Their mother had returned to us the two keys of the house which had not been lost. We had then crossed over and tacked on the door a sign, "For-Rent", in big black letters which he who ran or he who whizzed by in an automobile, might read. After which ceremony, the owner sat down and was sorrowful, for in this year of our Lord, who wishes to rent an old-fashioned house!

The little house itself seemed suddenly to have become self conscious and aware of new times and new customs with which it had nothing in common. Dignified, it stood, under a graceful elm tree, aloof from the noise and glare of the street. It peeped forth diffidently from its front windows beneath a protecting veil of twining clematis. It was like a once lovely and much sought after woman, who is suddenly brought face to face with the disconcert-

ing fact that a new generation has grown up about her, and that she is out of touch with the requirements of an eager on-rushing life. That to play the modern game with credit, she would need to be reconstructed from the cellar to the attic of her being!

"No electric lights!" a would-be tenant cried incredulously. "Oh, no one wants to be bothered with gas and matches these days!"

"No furnace heat!" exclaimed another with indignant emphasis. "My daughters go off to business early in the morning and would not think of getting up in a cold room!"

It *did* seem like cruelty, and yet one can remember days spent in a furnaceless home when our western city was young and apartment houses unknown, and it was thought a lark to iron the sheets of the beds with flatirons or to tuck in hot water bottles at night. We snuggled down between the warm coverings and drifted into dreamless slumber not since known in an overheated atmosphere.

No, the little old-fashioned house had humbly to acknowledge it had no up-to-date stunts! Lights did not flower from electric bulbs of ornate construction. The bath tub, after morning ablutions, did not, like an acrobatic animal, rear up on its hind feet and jump over the bed into a closet. Book-cases and buffets did not grow in the walls; nor did tables and beds disappear mysteriously with architectural legerdemain. The house was hopelessly out of date, but one loved it for its gentle suggestion of by-gone days of leisure and sweet homey comfort. It moved one to champion its cause and to flaunt its modest virtues.

"The porch is really charming in summer," I urged. "The elm tree and overhanging vines make it shady and cool even in the hottest weather."

"Yes," said the applicant indifferently. "But we never have no time to sit on the porch. The girls and I go to the movies every evening."

The Harrison roses and the lilac bush were pointed out to the next visitor, who parked her car at the curb with great dexterity and who was arrayed in sport clothes as if ready for action at a moment's notice. She did not even look at the rose bush, so I added with pride, "Those cherry trees are usually covered with fruit about the Fourth of July. They make delicious preserves." But this athletic looking person cut down the cherry trees with one sharp glance. "We don't put up fruit any more," she said. "It is cheaper to buy it at the stores and much less trouble. Haven't you a garage? You ought to have one instead of those trees!"

One house hunter was most depressing. He advised a lower rent, and to disparage the little house, he displayed a list of new apartment houses with their lists of dazzling attractions. If a family would pay for one room and a bath, a sum equivalent to the rent of a ten or twelve room house, and could take turns sleeping in an all too small apartment, they could dine in a gorgeous salon de luxe to the accompaniment of a fine orchestra. They could sit under the palms in a sun parlor and dance all night in a brilliantly lighted ball-room. Or, if one's tastes ran to athletics, one could abjure the social whirl of these fashionable abodes, and choose others with *two* rooms and a bath, with gymnasium and swimming pool attachments. Of course, there were problems connected with this manner of life which required radical and geometrical readjustment of the family circle.

"There is just one woman in this city," I finally announced, "who will rent this old-fashioned, no-more-wanted house. I shall possess my soul in patience until she appears."

And one day she came, — a tired looking, sweet faced woman who drew a sigh of relief at sight of the grass and the trees. "Oh, what a fine place for the boys to play!" she breathed. "And I can have a garden!"

"It is not a modern house," I conscientiously warned her with the oft repeated comment as we went inside.

"One can't have everything," she smiled. "And I can make it pretty with rugs and curtains. We are all home bodies and I *love* to fix up a house!" I saw by the light in her eyes that she was already exultantly planning. She was not standing in an empty cheerless house. She had covered the worn kitchen floor with linoleum; the preserves and jellies were in orderly rows on the pantry shelves; dainty curtains hung at the windows and portieres at the doors. She was like the artist who, before he has touched the brush to the canvas, sees his picture complete. She was the real old-fashioned household genius, who has the vision of home and who struggles to realize it, like all other creative workers, with a zeal which makes sacrifice easy and accomplishment a joy.

I removed the conspicuous "For Rent" placard, and handed the keys of the house to the new tenant. She had acquired a certain distinction in my mind, for I know that she is the last woman of her type, and that the next sign I shall tack upon the door of the little old-fashioned house will be "FOR SALE!"

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## THE NEW SUIT

By JOSEPHINE STURGEON

It was the Saturday before Easter. West Front Street was lined with cars; a few weatherbeaten buggies and still more weatherbeaten horses jogged clatteringly along, between the scurrying cars. On the sidewalks, shiny faced country women dragged their wide-eyed offspring from store to store in the last rush for Easter clothes. But Cletus Rarick, a white tulip in the button-hole of his dingy brown sweater, and his sister Fern,

were dawdling along aimlessly, dragging a wobbly wheeled wagon behind them, for they had just taken home the last washing.

Cletus was happier than he had ever been in his life, he thought. Tomorrow he was to take part in the children's program at Sunday School for the first time. He had never been in one before because he had never had anything to wear. Auburn was small enough to be aristocratic even in its religion. His little sisters had been more fortunate, for people were kind enough to give his mother things that could be cut down and made over for them; sometimes, too, the more plutocratic little girls outgrew their dresses while they were still quite new, and Lillie and Fern and Isis were quite elated with their own magnificence. But it was different with him; little boys always wore things out before they burst the buttons, and there never seemed to be anything quite big enough for nine year old trousers. So his own clothes had always been a sorry conglomeration, not good enough, his mother thought, to get up on the platform at church with. Things wouldn't have been that way, she said, if his father had lived.

But tomorrow was to be different. His Sunday School teacher, Mrs. Ostler, was going to see that he had a brand new suit. He had always been afraid of her stern capability before. She did not look, in her neat plainness, as if she would sympathize with an appetite between meals, or the desire to own white rabbits, but he concluded now that he must have been wrong. As they passed a windowful of little boy's clothes, he clutched Fern eagerly. Little wax boys, their noses thrust superciliously in the air, and wearing the very latest of belted suits, well creased trousers and polished oxfords stared unseeingly at them through the plate glass. "Look, Fern," he pointed a brown fore-finger at a taffy haired figure in a blue suit with plaited back, "do you suppose mine will look like that?"



She shook her head in china eyed amazement at such magnificence. "I do' know," she replied vaguely.

As they watched, a long shirt-sleeved arm thrust itself into the window, grasped the little wax boy in the blue suit by the legs, and drew him ignominiously out. The two children watched motionlessly. A few minutes later the heavy door opened, and Mrs. Ostler came out, bearing a large brown paper parcel; she hesitated a moment and then came toward him smiling. "Wouldn't you both like an ice cream cone?" she asked, taking a shiny dime from her purse. They nodded silently, Cletus with his eyes riveted on the parcel. She gave them the money and went on.

Cletus clutched the little girl excitedly, his eyes glistening. "Say, do you suppose Mis' Ostler bought that suit they took out?" he demanded. "Somebody did, and she had a big brown bundle! I bet she did! Won't I look swell?" he continued, "an' I know my part without a mistake. Are you sure you won't forget yours?" he inquired anxiously. "Gee, I can't wait for tomorrow to come. Let's hurry home so we'll be sure to be there when she brings it." He clutched Fern by the hand, and they zigzagged their way through the crowd as fast as their spidery legs would carry them, the wagon wobbling uncertainly behind them.

## II

They had only been in the little house that smelled of boiling clothes and burning wood a few minutes, when they heard Mrs. Ostler's rubber-heeled footsteps on the tiny porch. Cletus ran to the door, and threw it wide, the little girls at his heels. His mother, pulling down her rolled up sleeves, was not far behind them. Mrs. Ostler, a trifle out of breath as usual, sank heavily down on the sofa. Cletus noticed that she had the brown paper parcel. That *had* been his suit after all, he decided, with thump-

ing heart. "Now, there is no reason for your not being in the program, Cletus," she said, "you will be quite as neatly dressed as any of the other little boys." She smiled at them all, leaning heavily on her black umbrella.

Cletus' face was flushed beneath his yellow tan; he beamed like a jack o' lantern. "Oh, mother, you open it," he cried. He smoothed the parcel caressingly, thinking ecstatically of the blue belted suit. It would be the first time he had ever had anything that matched; he wondered if there would be a red tulip out tomorrow that he could wear — he hoped so. They all watched her wide-eyed, even baby Isis whose blue eyes were just above the level of the newspaper covered table. His mother, too, seemed excited, — it was all Cletus had talked of for weeks.

Her puffy pink fingers fumbled with the knotted cord. "Lillie," she commanded, "go get mother the scissors."

Mrs. Ostler struggled to her feet. "Let me do it for you," she volunteered, "you might be able to use the string again if you don't cut it." Slowly and carefully, with the aid of a black knobbed hatpin, she undid the knots one by one.

"My husband used to be that careful with knots," Mrs. Rarick remarked uneasily, "but you can't be with fingers like mine." She gazed at her blunt broken nailed fingers.

Cletus thought she would never get it undone; he thought he couldn't stand it, but finally the last knot came untied and she handed the parcel back to his mother. He drew a deep breath, in a minute he would see his first new suit; he closed his eyes for a second. When he opened them, his mother was holding the coat in front of him. It wasn't the lovely blue suit — it was neither belted — nor plaited in back — he shut his mouth determinedly, and held on to the table — it was an ugly green — a new suit without a belt and the trousers were gray! He

noticed that his mother's eyes were strangely bright as she looked at him.

"Why, these must be a lost coat and pants," piped up Fern, "they don't belong to the same family! Was they both orphans?"

The mother shook her head warningly. "It was real nice of you, Mis' Ostler," she broke in, "I don't know how to thank you. Cletus, don't you know what to say to the lady?" She came over and put her arm around his shoulder. He was glad that she did. He mumbled the required words, thinking of the blue suit he had hoped it would be, and of the belted suits the other boys would have — it wasn't even alike!

Mrs. Ostler laid the wrapping paper she had been neatly folding on the table. "It will be very serviceable," she said complacently, "the material is very good, and I got it a little large so he wouldn't outgrow it while there was still some wear in it. You can use this paper again," she concluded, "and I will see you all at Sunday School. You, too, I hope, Mrs. Rarick." She turned to smile benevolently at them as she reached the door.

### III

The next morning the four children started to Sunday School. The sky was blue and white; red and yellow tulips blossomed in people's yards; robins hopped cheerily in the green grass, searching for their Easter breakfast. Cletus looked at his little sisters proudly, yet longingly; in their made over dresses and their rag curled hair, they looked as nice as most of the other children would look, but *he* looked, he knew, as hopelessly fatherless as ever. He had not yet found himself in the new suit, he probably would not for a couple of years, and he hated the combination; the red tulip had bloomed but he had not worn it. On their way they had to pass the window that had filled him with such happy anticipations

yesterday. Cletus paused as if he were drawn by a magnet; he tried to find the pockets in his trousers, and to look nonchalant. The little girls waited for him silently. At last he turned away. "Aw, gee, I wouldn't look good in those kind anyway, would I, Fern?" he demanded.

But a block further on he told the little girls to go on without him. When he got home he told his mother that he felt ill. She covered him up on the sofa without a word, but when she leaned down to kiss him, each knew that the other's cheek was damp.

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## MASS IN THE VALLEY

By LEONARD LANSON CLINE

I went to sleep beneath an oak  
In a cool, shadowy place  
On the soft grass; but as I slept  
The sun in priestly silence crept  
Across the sky, and I awoke  
His hand upon my face.

The sun above me stopped and seemed  
Almost to fill the skies;  
It seemed a cloud of yellow flame  
Came down on hill and vale the same,  
And still I lay as one that dreamed  
And had no strength to rise.

And all the valley seemed to wait  
With sacramental awe;  
The hill beneath me I could feel  
With every tree and flower kneel  
As if a god were at the gate  
And dropped his eyes and saw.

And all the valley seemed to seethe  
With voices hushed in prayer  
From every bird and butterfly  
And brook and leaf and blade; and I  
Prayed too, though I did only breathe  
Upon the tremulous air.

"Introibo," then I heard a choir  
Take up the antiphon.  
I dared a glance, and O! it seemed  
As if a splendid presence gleamed  
Beside me there, a face of fire  
That smiled on me and shone.

And through my body went a glow  
Of life; I saw it pass  
Shimmering through a tree and thrill  
A drooping daisy and distil  
Into the eager earth and flow  
Quivering through the grass:

Glamor of life that each live thing,  
Flower or beast or clod,  
The dandelion as the rose  
And man as these but blindly knows:  
Passion eternal burgeoning  
In the hot breath of god.

As helpless as a fern was I  
That pentecostal noon:  
I might have been a tree that felt  
Its bareness into blossom melt;  
I knew what it would be to die  
And to be earth in June.

And O, the singing that I heard,  
Hosannas to the sun!  
And all the steaming valley rang  
With a mad psalm that crickets sang  
And droning bees and warbling birds  
And locusts every one!

Then of a sudden I perceived  
The chorus sang no more.  
It seemed a voice cried "Missa est!"  
The sun went down into the west,  
Trailing his skirt of golden weave  
Across the valley floor.

So I gave thanks and humbly kissed  
The ground where I had clung.  
I found upon a loaded bush  
A berry hot and full and flushed  
With sun, a scarlet eucharist,  
And crushed it on my tongue.

I went my way. The fields grew still,  
A star shone calm and white.  
My heart was all serenity.  
And then I knew what it would be  
To live, and be a lonely hill  
Beneath a star at night.

## TWO WOMEN AND HOG-BACK RIDGE

By MELVIN VAN DEN BARK

Mary Maticka became part of the Nebraska sandhills — that country of soft, yellow, shifting undulations that covers a heart-shaped fifth of the state like a sea, and is unknown and unsought by the toilers of the other fifths.

Early in September she came down from Ainsworth, thirty-five miles to the north, in the open spring buggy of the mail-man. They had driven south for six hours on a road which was for the most part a two-wheeled trail scarcely discernible in the thin prairie grass and only to be guessed at in the sand and sage-brush.

The mail-man slouched in the seat, his hat pulled down to his eyes, basking in the sun like a sand lizard, and licking and chewing the dry black hairs that fell over his lips. He said nothing.

Mary did not mind him; she watched the sand whirling in circles from the wheels. Some of it fell on the tin can covered hubs with a peck-peck sound. It was like water running through mountain streams, like the soft, chanting song of a smooth sea.

Gossamerly she wove the scene of what she was leaving — South Omaha, where she had been born, raised, where her father worked in one of the packing houses eight hours a day, knocking beeves in the head with a sledge, where her mother packed sausages in little white paste-board boxes with yellow labels, and where her four brothers worked, too. Eight and ten hours of it — in the killing house, where all the streams were thick, blood-red, the clouds clinging steam, all the odor suffocating like warm blood. One suffered all that until one became steeped in it. Then it didn't matter.

But she had escaped to high school and had taken the normal-training course. She had her living to earn, being the daughter of packing house laborers. There was

stenography — a four-year course of it. But she couldn't accept that: eight hours in a nine by twelve room in a tall building, with the click-click of typing machines and the white glare of buildings through the windows.

It wasn't exactly that she wanted to be a teacher more than anything else. But teaching meant escaping the hog-butcher town, the smell of warm blood, the people there, helpless and spiritless as the beasts they butchered. She wanted something else. She had always known that there was something else. When a little girl, she had once heard a friend of her father's tell of a place called Utah — what, she didn't remember. But it must have been something fine, she thought, like lots of stars and sky at night. It was that something that made her baptize her little doll Utah. Really it was more than a name. It was something faraway, something beautiful that would make her happy. . . . Sleeping, Mary thought, "This is Utah, this is Utah, really."

There was the peck-peck sound of the sand falling on the cans that covered the hubs to keep them free of the grit. She was sleeping, after a fashion; it was the being under a white glaring sun that made the sky a blinding mirror, a huge candescent light of the whole heavens, the man who would not talk, the tom-tom regularity of the wheels crunching the sand.

It's like that in the hills. She was beginning to feel a part of that great unborn place, to be swallowed up, though she didn't know it, to become identified with it.

There were ages of sleeping, half awake, half drugged with the heat.

In the hot mist of noonday they approached Midvale. Before them swam the long low soddy which was the town — store, postoffice, cream station, house. In the billowy ocean of blinding yellow it was held by some magic a suspended purple block. At the foot of the hill lay the Calamus river, a ribbon strip of silver fringed



with clumps of dusty cottonwoods that twinkled, and rattled dry brownish-green leaves.

They pulled up the hill slowly and with effort, the sand scratching, grinding, showering from the wheels into the buggy. When the top was reached the horses stopped and the mail man climbed out. He pulled a limp mail-sack from under the seat, shook it a little, dragged it into the soddy.

Then Mary Maticka climbed out. She walked a few steps to the high point of the hill and looked out into the sea of yellow, green, lavender folds.

Strangely, mysteriously, she seemed to find something of what she wanted: stillness and inaction, that for her was being; a sort of melting out into the nakedness of those hills, swaying there identified with its monotony and melancholy, in an ocean of dreams without a sound.

The group of women in the doorway, who had come to trade and to get the mail, saw the large young woman with blue-black hair cropped to the nape of her neck, a loose-fitting orange jacket, a black skirt. They saw too her feet planted firmly, apart, as though she were holding her body from the wind. The women in the low dark doorway watched her. One said, "Did the board know she'd bobbed hair and was yellow-like?" And another, "What does she see?"

And they looked steadily at Mary and they saw what she was facing. Far over the north, west, and south was a heat-hazed, treeless region stretching in soft, round hills that far away blurred into the white sky. Here and there were blots of cream-colored dunes in the grey-olive hills. The grass was burnt brown, the air hot and fanning an aroma of dry grass over the country that far and near had the monotony and the melancholy and something of the beauty and the fascination of the sea under an eternal sun.

Mary stood still, inarticulate, her eyes like black pools

into which the light sinks. She was as wooden then as though her soul were flying about the hills like a swallow.

The women watched her and wondered curiously. They did not see the hills but they saw Mary like a splash of strange new color, these wives of toilers who neither laugh nor see. And beyond her they saw the prairie — still prairie, excepting that it is now cut into checker-board sections and fenced here and there. On those squares of parched hills they have built their soddies, dug-outs, half-soddies maybe, rarely a frame house. And all the toilers are struggling to dig a living out of the soil in this region which God never made for farming. Never made for farming; they feel that. But they are helpless and drugged dry-eyed and passionless with the soft hills and the soft low winds that never die. Never do they whimper — these lost souls; nor ever wonder about other lands from which some of them came. They ask nothing, nothing excepting that all who venture in become sand-hillers — swallowed souls.

Finally Mary turned and walked to the soddy. The women stepped a little back and she entered.

"You are Mrs. Brindly?" she asked one woman.

"Yes," the woman said. "And you er Mary Maticka." A little girl dressed in a faded and thin blue calico slip, whose hair was yellow and thin, whose legs were bare and dirty, was tugging at a fold in the woman's skirt. "We ken go over to Mr. Lange's now. The schoolmams always board there. And he ken sign your contract. He ain't signed yet, is he?"

"No," said Mary.

"You must be tired," Mrs. Brindly said.

"Not very, really," Mary answered.

They went out the low door and over to a lumber wagon. A young man, tanned brown as coffee, jumped from the seat and took Mary Maticka's bag without saying a word.

"This is my son John. He's got your things in here. You paid the mail-man?"

John Brindly sat on a board across the front of the wagon. The women seated themselves in the spring seat which had been moved to the center for them.

They thumped along over the two miles of hidden road among the brown warty hills to the soddy of the Langes. It was a small sod house with a curved roof; it looked like a huge, dry, mud-pie bread loaf. On one side was a carpet patch of yellowish-green garden; on the other side was a low frame barn. One could smell the cabbage patch, the stable, the dry grass. A man was standing under the patched tin water-shed that stuck out above the door like the peak of a cap.

The three alighted and the man came up. He was stoop-shouldered and wore a greenish felt hat punched with diamond-shaped holes. His face was yellowish-brown like a dry cotton-wood leaf.

"Good afternoon," he said, looking at the horses and then into the wagon.

"This is the new schoolmam, Mr. Lange."

"Glad to know ya," he said. He put out his hand which Mary took quickly and firmly. "Grub's hard scratching here, but we've boarded the schoolmams six terms now." He chuckled a little. "Hope you'll like it."

"I want to, Mr. Lange," Mary said.

Then he told her about the school teacher of the past year. She had come to the hills in a camp-wagon with her husband. The district hadn't a teacher yet, it seemed, and, when they learned that this woman had held a term in some place in Missouri, they got her a permit and hired her. But she had had twins at Christmas time, and they let her go. The year before that, he went on, they had a girl from Lincoln. But while playing a game at a party she sat on a married man's lap. "She was let go," he said, "seein' she was no model fer the district."

They had a new school house now, a frame building, and they wanted things to go pert, the children to get learning, to show progress. His boy Roscoe was sixteen, and had been in the fifth reader for three terms. He wanted him to get out of that reader. He hoped, too, that the new schoolmam was sensible.

Then Mary met Mrs. Lange and the three Lange boys and the two Lange girls, one of whom was called Judy. Mrs. Lange was tall, thin, starved-looking. Her eyes were two black caverns, black as though they were circled with paint. Her cheeks were hollow. Her whole face had something of the mockery, the bitterness of an inscrutable gargoyle. It was hideous, mad, dead, yet fascinating. One expected a voice from her belly, deep and empty, and words inarticulate, grunted.

Mrs. Lange at first saw Mary indifferently, unseeing almost. When she looked up her head swung slowly from side to side with her breathing. Then her eyes became fixed on Mary, frightened as though this young woman were filling the whole soddy and pressing against her, going to strike her, pushing her into the wall. Then there was a quick, faint lighting in Mrs. Lange's face — a sort of recognition. But it as soon went out.

Mary was to share a room with Judy — a narrow room, one of the partitioned-off ends of the house. It was lighted by a small four-paned window which could be lowered only half way. The walls were plastered with gumbo, a flat-grey, clay plaster dug up a few feet below the sand on the place. In one corner was a low, knobbed bed, painted a dark heavy green and covered with a blue, star-pattern quilt. There was an old dresser at one end of the room and red paper hearts, children's valentines made at school, were stuck on the mirror's edge. The room had a simplicity, and a crudity that one finds in the homes of some peasants. There was a roughness, and an easy comfort like an old ballad in it all. The greys and greens and blues of the room were of the earth itself.

Mary threw her orange coat on the bed. Then she went into the kitchen. Mrs. Lange was taking a piece of black paper the size of a post-card from a package. She put it into a saucer, covered it with water, and set it between a myrtle-tree and a cactus plant in the deep window sill. This paper would attract and poison flies. Then she wiped her hands on the under-side of her dark apron.

"I ain't spread much . . . Miss Maticka," said Mrs. Lange. She spoke low, with a drawl. With her cooking spoon she made big circles in the pot of cabbage soup she had on the stove. There would be that, baked squash, boiled potatoes, and fried pork for supper.

"You may call me Mary, Mrs. Lange." Mary took a chair by the kitchen table.

"We're used to callin' the other schoolmams so. I hope you'll like it here. It's different from most places. Some like it; but some don't. Seems as like it holds you though."

"It is something of a world by itself, isn't it? Shut in by the chains of hills that bubble into each other like waves in the sea. Huge, golden, round waves. . . ." Mary looked out the white oblong of the doorway. "You like living here?"

"No, not always. It's hard grubbin' as the men folk say. We've some garden — that's the only green. But a garden one year is a blow-out the next. . . . Yes, it is something like a sea," said this old-looking woman who could never have been young. "But I don't often get time or feelin' to think like that."

"A blow-out?"

"A witch's pot — hollowed, useless hole in the hills — blown that way. The wind is forever changing the hills, like waves. God didn't make this fer farmin', Henry says. He would leave, and yet he won't. And nothin' much ever comes or happens here. We're swallowed-like. . . . Like the sea . . . yes."

After the school day, Mary would write the next day's assignments and exercises on the blackboard and would change the water in the jar that held the yellow-thimbles or grasses she picked or was given. Sometimes after school she would read from the books sent in a chest to the district by the State's Traveling Library Society.

All this was very much as a school teacher should be: the exercises on the board, the yellow-thimbles in the quart fruit jars, the books from the traveling library. All that was very well. But that wasn't all. School teachers should not walk early, late, very late, on Hog-back Ridge, or any ridge for that matter. This long, humped hill, Hog-back Ridge, dominated the others — its smooth curve drew a longer line across the sky. It was the only one that was named in the country thereabouts. It was of looser sand, more worthless, and would give root to neither grass nor weeds. The cattle never nosed it. It was a bully among the other hills. No, one shouldn't stride it like a pirate.

But all the sandhillers about became used to the figure of the young woman whipped by the wind . . . the orange jacket like a still flame, the black skirt. And the sandhillers in the district soon saw that she was different, that she wasn't 'regular' like a school teacher is expected to be. It might have been the orange jacket she wore, full, and bright as a torch, or the black hair cut short, with a crescent of steel-blue when the light fell on it.

More than once Mrs. Lange in her doorway saw Mary Maticka stand on the hills that were like soft silver in the moonlight. And at their base along the dry creek bed were clumps of cottonwoods, dark and sombre. When the branches stirred, the bright light danced on the ground making lacy patterns of the moonlight. There was a stillness like before creation. It would be broken only by a voice in a faraway cup of the hills calling to cattle. The echo would fly about . . . farther and farther away.

Sometimes Mary Maticka would stand for half an hour, sometimes much longer, on the highest part of Hog-back Ridge. And Mrs. Lange, pitting choke-cherries, would look at that dark figure against the sky until her eyes burned. She would put her hands on the door-plank on which she sat, and thrust her head forward. She looked hungry. She would wipe her hands across her eyes and the purple juice would make her eyes burn the more.

Once little Judy, thin and elfin, came straying about the corner.

"What er ya lookin' at, Ma?" she asked.

The mother turned to the child who was squatted beside her, said nothing, stretched forward again.

"Ain't she queer? But she ain't one bit aferd, she tol' me. Old Lady Brindly marked it was the beads she carries in er pocket, saved er from bein' ferd. Do ya know 'bout that, Ma? . . . She carries brown beads and there's a little cross on 'em. Old Man Brindly says she's most like a witch walkin' over the hills all time o' night scared a nothin'. And I told er Old Man Brindly said he never let er in the district agin. And I told Old Brindly 'bout that black cross with the stuff on it like comes off matches — like fire flies. And Old Lady Brindly says 'John tol' er Mary ain't God-feared, but's poetry.' Think a that, Ma."

"Keep still, Judy," said Mrs. Lange.

"Ain't she queer, Ma?" asked the child.

Mrs. Lange looked eager, hungry, as if something she had waited for a hundred years was within her vision, something she could breathe, something she could melt into. And there was, too, little Judy, sitting at her mother's side and bending to the hills; wondering, peering, strange little child.

Then another figure arose on the hill top. The two stood like black posts against the green sky above the silver hill. When they sat they made a large black tum-



ble-weed against the sky-line. Then Mrs. Lange knew that John Brindly was there too.

But generally she saw just the one dark line against night. And on black or stormy nights she could see no line, but she knew it was moving about, talking and singing on Hog-back Ridge, or perhaps silent and brooding in the cups among the hills.

The rain would patter on the tin water-shed above the door; it would rattle the water-shed like faraway thunder. Mary would stay out; sometimes she waited until it stopped, then she would come in.

"She's a fool; that's what she is, a damn fool," Old Lange would say. "Runnin' round school nights. It's educatin' kids is er business. She's cheating the district. She ain't right, I tell you."

Mrs. Lange would say nothing, her eyes and cheeks lost in the deep, dark shadows, her head like a white skull on a black curtain. From the dark corner she would face the lamp which made a yellow circle like a big harvest moon on the red-and-white checkered table cloth.

Yes, indeed, Mary wasn't regular; she was queer. And Mr. Lange was afraid because she wasn't regular. He was afraid of her because she liked the place; she chased about the hills like the large spider-web balls of tumble weed.

And not only she; no, it wasn't only she. For Mrs. Lange, too, something of Mrs. Lange was always with her, as though her heart were being carried about in the pocket of Mary's loose-fitting orange jacket. Mary was like a floating, revealing spirit to his woman. It wasn't natural, regular, this silent calling and pointing of the one, this silent answering and changing in the other. He was losing her, perhaps, losing his woman. And it was all through damned rotten nonsense. This Mary had no business drawing his woman with her. It was like having a dead woman moving about the house, an empty, sightless woman.



Old Lange knew he'd do something about it. He could face this situation. He had others. He'd show the sandhillers there that he'd do something about it.

And so it was that with her beads, and her walking of nights, late, in the moonlight, under white stars, and in the storm, Mary Maticka began to be talked about. But the sandhillers' talking about Mary wasn't enough. It wouldn't do much of anything, Lange thought. They didn't know about what was happening to his woman. They didn't see that. Their talking their way about Mary was all right. It would help, perhaps, in ousting her. And only ousting her could save his woman from this mooning, this strange acting, this foolishness.

It was this way at the Lange's one day. Old Lange was leaning against the big range. "We can't have this talkin' 'bout Mary," he began. "'Tain't good for er and 'tain't good fer us. Er runnin' out a stormy nights worse en a coyote, and with that orange coat and horse mane hair. . . . When I first seen er I says she's mighty peculiar eyes, all black like she didn't have any white — like a cat's at night. Eyes tells it."

For a moment Mrs. Lange looked up from the cabbage she was cutting for kraut, then she bent to her cutting again. "She's finding things, perhaps — things we've all been wantin' — something here I've wanted, but forgot I wanted. I don't know. That's the reason her and John Brindly wander about — her alone mostly, but him always wantin' to be along. And it comes in the rain to her, too. I remember it's like my mother always used to get out in the rain — and I like it too."

She looked unseeing, vacantly, at the lamp on the table.

"That's what I'm comin' to — just what I've been thinkin'. You watchin' her hungry-like — 'tain't good fer us, I say. She'd best go. She ain't settin' no model fer the kids, and youse gettin' that way. Youse like you wasn't in the house . . . . damn er."

He walked over to the hay burner, a boiler-like article which was stuffed with hay. He spat into it. Then he put it inverted on the open stove. The fire crackled up into the hay and clouds of white smoke spurted out with the heat. The smudge filled the room, like a heavy incense, clouded the smaller children who were playing under the table, and the pile of cow-chips, another kind of sandhillers' fuel, which was heaped high in the corner near the stove. The lamp glow was like a dull lemon-yellow moon in a blue-grey fog.

Through the fog her voice came low, hollow, dead. "I like her and so do the children. Judy loves her specially. . . . That's poetry, they say, she sees in the hills. I wish I could see it. I'd be better here."

And the other voice in the fog answered, "Yeah, ya like er fifteen a month, ya do. But I ain't goin' to put up with a schoolmam in my house gallivantin' in the moonlight and rain — spoonin' ya can bet, disgraceful-like out there, for fifteen or thirty." He coughed, choked with the smoke. "Damn this smoke. It's the damp holdin' it down."

He opened the door, but the smoke was banked in by the thick white mist outside.

"Dark as a well out," he said, "and her out in it gettin' wet. Even coyotes is in their holes nights like this. . . . I'll show that hussy something — hussy is what she is."

There was no answer from the other voice in the smoke fog. Old Lange took a paper and sat to the table. He drew the lamp nearer.

Mrs. Lange called the three youngest children and went into the room where they and Mr. Lange slept. Soon after, he finished looking over a farm paper and followed them.

It was much later when Mary Maticka felt her way into the kitchen and across to her room. She stumbled

against nothing; she seemed to see in the night as in the day. But in the room she lit the lamp and adjusted the paper shade. There fell a round shower of light on the floor near the dresser. She dropped a string of brown beads into a drawer and began to pull off her clothes.

"Is that you, Mary?" called Mr. Lange.

There was no answer.

She slipped into a full flannel gown and climbed over Judy into the bed.

Well, Old Lange could wait for a chance to show his authority. His chance would come; a good one; it always had.

The Friday night of the first week in November, Mary Maticka went with John Brindly in the spring wagon to a dance in the Richard's soddy. The night was lighted by an orange moon which draped the hills with mauve and silver veils, cool, perfumed. The tumble weeds, big as cart wheels, rolled over the hills in slow chase. Once the wagon scared up a flock of prairie chickens that glistened in the moonlight like silver birds. They scudded a hundred feet ahead and settled in a thicket of sagebrush and soap-weed. A rabbit kept jumping ahead of the buggy for a half mile.

John began to sing an old song of the early Sandhillers.

"Don't ask me my name,  
An old bachelor I am,  
But I'll tell all the same  
I've a very good plan;  
You'll find me out west  
On Goose Creek plain  
A starving to death  
On a government claim."

Mary wondered about his being a man of the hills. She had wondered a great deal about John. She went to

parties like this one with him. He was a part of the hills, of course, — a very human part, but forever and ever? What would he have been in the packing houses? Like them? Was he a product of the hills, an accident with them? Did he find in them a sort of completion of himself — a part that one couldn't phrase, or talk about to others, but a consummation that another might understand?

Did the hills hold that something for John which was more than the cattle of his father's hills, the little patch of short, dried corn that rattled so hauntingly like something starved, lifeless, like a scare-crow, more than three meals a day, and a bed at night? Had he given something to the hills as she had? And had he taken something from them as she had? Something one couldn't really talk about, nor cry over, but be happy for?

He looked at Mary who was crouched in the wagon seat. He sang again.

"I've something sweet to tell you,  
The secret you must keep.  
Now remember when I tell it,  
I'm talking in my sleep."

"Do you know that one, Mary? Like it?" he asked.

Mary made no answer.

John broke in again as though he were talking with her for the first time.

"I want to get out of here. I want to go to Wyoming where I can take more land and a better lot of it, too. There's nothing here, really. One can't even stir the sand or it becomes alive and blows away. I'm tired of it."

"Nothing here?"

"You — of course, and that's everything. But even we couldn't get on well here."

"And there's nothing more — nothing that makes you bigger, happier, really glad?"

"Well, I like that in you, Mary, and that's why . . . Other girls don't see and feel that way. . . . I suppose what you see in the hills I see in you. But gee whiz, Mary, it's you, not the hills. . . . The hills in you — that's funny, isn't it?" With soft laughter he ridiculed himself. "But we can't die here, Mary."

"Die?" she repeated. "I'm just beginning to live."

"Oh," said John.

"Yes," Mary answered him.

John looked at Mary veiled in soft dark shadows of the night and talking low and sweetly like a sleeper. There was nothing awake in Mary to which he could now appeal — it was gone.

Mary knew now that John didn't smell the mint and dry grass of the hay flats, didn't hear the crunching of the sand on the road, didn't see the low-sailing birds scudding away like silent silver ships when the wagon rumbled past, didn't see the white, burning stars.

John felt Mary's withdrawal. He didn't understand, but he felt it was final. He thought he would like to see a light in a window. He called to the team and slapped them on the flanks with the reins. They took up a trot and the wagon rumbled on.

Finally they reached the sod shanty of the Richard's. It was two-roomed. The dance was in the larger which was almost cleared. On the table pushed to the corner were two lamps which made huge shadows that doubled and doubled like wind-blown giants, that bent on the walls, and piles of cakes, sandwiches that were thick and from which hung edges of pink meat filling, and cups and saucers in towers a foot high.

The room was hot, filled with a dozen or more perspiring women and girls whose waists were drawn tight across full breasts. They sat in a row of chairs along one side of the room, waiting for the men and for the music. There were some men and boys in the room, coat-

less, clustered in a corner. Some were whispering, and a few would laugh twitteringly. But most of them were wide-eyed and silent like the women, and stared unseeing toward the piles of sandwiches and cups and saucers.

There was a call for the groups outside. They came in and hung about the doorway. The fiddler sawed on his fiddle, screeching, scraping, like a knife cleaning a pot.

A yellow-haired young fellow mounted a chair, stooping to avoid the ceiling. Then he began, "All join hands en circle to the left."

The dancing began, mechanically, not gladly. There was a shuffle, shuffle of feet, few laughs, serious faces. A haze of dust arose and hung about the floor as high as the knees of the dancers. The light played on it and made golden shafts. The shuffle, shuffle; the sawing, sawing, sawing, of the fiddle; the dull thudding of the fiddler's heel beating time. The dust rose to the low ceiling and the merry-makers' noses burned dry with it.

It was a jolly evening for Mary, handsome, warm, whirling and whirling in the dust-built cloud that glistened like powdered gold.

There were few pauses between dances. The merriement was running in whirling circles, gay halos in bright dust. The dancers circled and circled and slowed in their circling only when there was a cherry red flush in the east.

About four o'clock that morning, Mary Maticka jumped down from the wagon seat and after a word of goodbye to John went into the Lange's.

At seven she answered Mr. Lange's vigorous pounding on her door. Through breakfast he did not say a word to her. He scowled at his wife a great deal. But she came and went with griddle cakes, vacantly, as though moved by springs.

When Mary was pushing her chair from the table he said, "I wouldn't give twenty-five cents for a schoolmam that'd go to them damn dances."

He chuckled over saying that. He had 'em now. He'd rid the district and his house of this hussy, and his woman would be busy and decent as she used to be. A horse whipping was what they needed. It'd stir them up, keep them straight in their harness. Anyway there'd be no more of this. He had them both now.

Mary looked at him a moment, a little curiously, with eyes black and living with the whole of her being. All the light in the room was sinking into her eyes. Mr. Lange zig-zagged his chair on its rear legs. Mary said nothing and left.

He brought a hard fist down on the table. The dishes clattered and rattled. Then the house was still. Mrs. Lange did not come in from the kitchen. But he meant business. He'd had enough of this Mary Maticka, plenty enough of her and of his mooning woman.

In the school before the arrival of any of the children, Mary was lifting the cover of her desk. She felt a shadow and turned to the door. Old Lange stood framed there, against the white glare of the sun. He threw a wad of paper at her desk. It fell on the floor before her. Mary's eyes stayed on the shadow. Old Lange saw them and his lips moved. He had cursed those eyes many times before. Now he cursed the eyes, the orange jacket, the black hair. Anyway he really had her now. He'd damn them and save his mooning woman.

Mary saw him turn and hurry across the school yard. For a moment he stopped in the fire guard, a strip of up-turned soil four feet wide that squared the school yard, then hurriedly made up the hill. He became smaller and smaller, sinking below the horizon like a little grey ship on the sea.

She picked up the paper which was folded to the size of a postage stamp. Unfolding it, she read:

You been here long enough and you  
can hunt another boarding place.

H G Lange

She put the note into her pocket. It burned there all morning. At noon she went to the Lange's soddy. Mrs. Lange was in a chair at the table; Mr. Lange was away. The woman turned her head as Mary entered.

"I don't understand this, Mrs. Lange — this note, I mean."

"Well, I understand," she said. "And you won't leave, I tell you. I understand; I've always understood."

Mary stood with her hands thrust hard in the pockets of the orange jacket. She saw the woman's tousled hair, the tightened muscles in her face and arms, the red flame on one cheek; she heard the labored words; she knew that Mrs. Lange had been beaten and whipped by her man. The woman was one sore.

"It ain't so much the dance as that cross with the watch-glow stuff on it, and your beads, and most of all your liking to walk witch-like on Hog-back Ridge when it's pitch dark, he says. They's stories out ain't true. . . . It's 'cause you're different, and like sun flowers . . . that's it. . . . And I like them . . . sunflowers. . . . I understand, I tell you. . . . But he's going to leave, if you don't go. And I says I'm leaving if you do. And he found this and said you're loose and crazy and ain't moral."

She held out to Mary a yellow piece of paper.

Dunes of my land; hot sands, metallic flashes —  
blind me out. Full, rich hills of yellow, gold,  
below blue sky. You tell me you are a child unborn,  
a land of a tomorrow.



Fateful dunes of sand, cutting, churning, blinding,  
binding earth to sky and sky to earth. Crowd-  
ing, capricious slaves of winds that weave cord-  
ed fields, seas of molded waves. Living not a  
day; dancing to death with weather's play.

"And he said that's dirty . . . . *child unborn*,  
and you a schoolmam. . . . And I told him I like it  
. . . . and it was poetry-like, contrary no rime and  
the like. . . . And he saw me on Hog-back Ridge last  
night, like you."

"You walked on Hog-back Ridge?"

"And he said first thing he knowed I'd have a John  
up there too, for all the sandhill country to see. But I  
told him the hills is enough."

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## THE MIDLAND LIBRARY

### "TWO LIVES": AN UNPUBLISHED POEM BY WILLIAM ELLERY LEONARD

Reviewed by C. F. ANSLEY

Readers of *THE MIDLAND* generally seem to share a feel-  
ing that they almost constitute an order; what they lack  
seems to be a badge. If they wore insignia, as a distinc-  
tive hat or a streamer, probably the impulse to accost one  
another would be more spontaneous than in some orders.  
They have interests in common; all of them must like  
good literature, for *THE MIDLAND* offers nothing more.  
The hat or the streamer would be a serviceable and wel-  
come introduction. The order would not be numerous as  
yet, but it would not be exclusive; it would aim to en-  
compass the globe and achieve the brotherhood of man.  
The project seems almost possible; men who do not re-

spond to good literature are hardly worth brotherhood or salvation. Like other brotherhoods, we might extirpate the infidel.

If our bond were not literature but music, Beethoven might conceivably say to another member (say "X"): "I have just composed my Fifth Symphony. I am not ready yet to give it to the public; but you may tell the brotherhood about it if you wish, and I will play for them such passages as you choose." That would be an opportunity of which no X would deprive the brotherhood. Yet what should X say about the Fifth Symphony? Superlatives seem uncritical, though languages are well equipped with them because sometimes nothing else will tell the truth. X would have to use them freely or say nothing, which would end the proceedings. That would be the only objection to saying nothing, for nobody would wish to interrupt the symphony or to have it interrupted by talk.

The MIDLAND is not music but literature; the allegory is so to be interpreted. The composer is really a poet, William Ellery Leonard; his poem is entitled "Two Lives." I am X. If the brotherhood will pardon my interruptions, which may be recognized by typography and need not be read, I can give them real poetry; great poetry, I know.

Each of the more than two hundred stanzas of the poem is a sonnet of the kind called "Miltonic". This stanza form is accepted as the most exacting in English poetic art and the best. Leonard is not experimenting in novel forms; he is using with mastery the instrument preferred by masters before him. The Miltonic sonnet is so finished that some have thought it unadapted to a sequence of stanzas, but the theory has not held. "Two Lives" is not a sonnet sequence but a poem. It has unity; it coheres most firmly. Excerpts can not even suggest the architecture of the poem, but its art equals in the whole the perfection of the details.

The theme of the poem should be left for the poem to give. It is tragic enough to reach Shakespeare's tests; its passion is all that man may undergo and more. It is not Greek tragedy but Elizabethan; it is not all tragedy, it is "Two Lives". These two lives have their childhood, their romance, their joy. No instrument of the orchestra seems missing, no human mood to fail of interpretation.

The persons of the poem are Americans of today; the scene is Madison, Wisconsin. This indicates caricature or *genre*, rather than a tragic theme in Miltonic sonnets. Leonard, it has to be confessed, is quite unconscious of his impropriety; he simply fails to see even occasion for argument. To him there is poetry in Madison as in Florence or Athens, and he does not know that no Florence or Athens can in the nature of things ever be in the Middle West. He finds poetry and he gives it to his readers; obtuseness of the kind may yet change the nature of things. Burns and Scott were enough to change it once; Yeats and a few friends now free Ireland from old limitations. What Madison is to Leonard, he must tell:

The shining City of my manhood's grief  
Is girt by hills and lakes (the lakes are four),  
Left by the ice-sheet which from Labrador  
Under old suns once carved this land's relief,  
Ere wild men came with building and belief  
Across the midland swale. And slope and shore  
Still guard the forest pathos of dead lore  
With burial mound of many an Indian chief,  
And sacred spring. Around me, Things-to-come  
Are rising (by the plans of my compeers)  
For art and science, like a wiser Rome  
Upon a wiser earth for wiser years. —  
Large thoughts, before and after; yet they be  
Time's pallid backgrounds to my soul and me.

'Tis no mean city: when I shut my eyes,  
To thought she seems memorial as they,

The world's white cities famous far away,  
With her own beauty, her own sunset skies  
Across her waters, her own enterprise  
Beside her woodlands, with her thousand homes,  
Her squares and flowering parks, and those two domes  
Of Law and Learning, and her bold and wise.  
She too shall have, and has even now, her fame  
(Like Florence or Geneva, once the fair  
Sojourn of worthy men), and of the same  
A solemn part, perhaps, shall be that there,  
By house and tree, to flesh and blood befell  
The things whereof this story is to tell.

Whatever the poem may or may not hold of prose fact, every word is obviously poetic truth, adequately lived by the poet in imagination at least and given to readers with no stinting of artistic skill. The poet writes:

And with firm art's supreme austerity

The line seems to exemplify as well as to describe his method, "an honest method, as wholesome as sweet." The reader may follow through some stanzas the sure and fine emotional and artistic response to the day's work and the day's life:

I came from years already grim forsooth  
With gruelling adventures: as a boy  
Puzzling on farmstead my slow way to Troy  
With Homer, the Ionian; then, as youth,  
Fighting 'gainst poverty to close with Truth,  
In colleges by Hudson, Charles, and Rhine;  
Climbing in tempest Alp and Apennine;  
Drinking with peasants in a tavern booth  
By Seine and Tiber to forget a face;  
As man, an office drudge for shelter, bread —  
My own and others' — with never kind release  
From aching eyes; still sleepless in my bed, —  
So when Life called me to this lovely place,  
I wrote a friend: "I've found my work, my peace."

I found my work: Life gave to me the lease  
Of scholar-shop, as long I'd struggled for,  
With desk and bench and blackboard; by the door  
A broad blue map of all the Isles of Greece,  
Northward to Colchis and the Golden Fleece  
And west to Ithaca; beside the clock,  
Eternal Parthenon on that high rock;  
A plaster bust, the white-helmed Pericles,  
In further corner. Here from day to day,  
While through the window flashed the lake and wood,  
I taught what Hellas still has soul to say  
To generous boys and girdled womanhood.  
O had my work remained my all for me,  
I had found perhaps my peace . . . 'twas not to be.

I came from other labor, other times,  
And other houses, half a fugitive  
Till then round earth. I sought a place to live,  
After my needs: a table for my rhymes  
And books, a bed for sleep, for human sleep,  
A friendly household, that would let me roam  
Its grass and porches, like a man at home —  
Yet yield (O prose of life!) its roof-tree cheap.  
I wandered, hunting, many a pleasant lane  
And highway under elms in arching rows,  
And many a brick-paved court, with saplings set  
And lilacs, rang at many doors in vain,  
Whose housewives smiled . . . until, toward day's  
    bright close,  
I spied a placard: "Attic room to let."

That house stood white . . . with earth's old evening  
    sun

Beside her (yet behind her far and still  
Across the shimmering Indian lake and hill),  
Vista'd through private oaks. The lawn did run  
In shining emerald, curving like a bow,  
(As I explored) O under cherry and peach,  
And hedged from neighbors by the goldenglow  
And hollyhock, down to a little beach  
And rustie shelter. In front were beds of flowers . . .

Whose names I learned . . . thereafter. A strange  
vine

Wound up the pillars with the summer hours,  
And two great trunks, festooned with thick woodbine,  
Bordered the wooden path — could such a place  
(And why?) still crave a stranger's step and face?

Between those festooned trunks, at gable-end  
Of that white mansion, looking out upon  
The low moon (yellowing after set of sun),  
A triple window, like a waiting friend,  
Seemed calling me to enter and ascend,  
So cosy were the little panes of glass,  
Half-curtained in the dusk above the grass;  
Joyous it seemed and ready to defend,  
As 'twere a living thing, whoever might,  
With genial hopes and sinless memories,  
Labor by day, or slumber there by night  
Within its chamber . . . gloaming fancies these . . .  
Then downstairs some one lit an early light . . .  
An Old Man pulled the shade behind the trees.

That attic room became my destiny:  
In each man's life there's some excelling spot,  
Indoors or out, that may not be forgot, —  
Some hall whose music set his spirit free,  
Some stream unbridged which lost him victory,  
Some hut, some hill, determining his lot,  
Dividing still what-is from what-is-not,  
In life of each man — whether you or me . . .  
Of which hereafter . . . But you shall not think,  
You few who read my story shall not say,  
"He would make big the things of everyday  
By out-worn rhetoric." For my hair is gray  
Through manhood's commonplaces, and all ink  
Lags ever in the rear of such as they.

That attic room became my destiny.  
Although for long elsewhere I've slept since then,  
And elsewhere been so busy with the pen  
And elsewhere talked, 'tis no mere memory —  
For there, still there, I seem to breathe, and be

There, with the spacious light of east and west  
From either gable-end, by chair and chest,  
Table and bookshelf, looking out to see  
Now the still street of elms and now the lake,  
As if 'twere windowed only for my sake —  
Windowed in front, and yet behind, for one  
Who loves on earth, beyond all reason why,  
O both the rising and the setting sun,  
The morning and the evening of the sky . . .

There by the chimney and the open fire  
Of splintered shingles, brush, and billets (borne  
In arm from snow-swept woodpile many a morn) —  
There, as the yellow flames in tongue and spire  
From their foundations leap a span and higher,  
And live suspended in the dark recess,  
And then, like summoned ghosts in swift distress,  
Sweep up the flue, and vanish ere they tire;  
There, whilst I lean against my knees, and guess  
(Stirring with idle poker now and then)  
What song it was the Siren sang to men,  
What Helen's girdle, what Calypso's dress,  
I hear (for I seem there, forever there)  
A tiptoe footstep on the attic stair.

Not to use my privilege too greedily, I shall limit the rest of my selections to interpretations of religious experience. The glorious old sonnet form responds, it will be found, to our failures as it once responded to Milton's faith, and its music can blend our discords with the old harmonies. As I shall not much longer interrupt the poetry, I shall here testify that I mean never to have my best books on a shelf without room for this poem. A British ambassador once embarrassed Americans by asking "Where are your poets?" If the question were now repeated, I at least should think that I knew a part of the answer; and I could not help wondering "Where are yours?" How well or ill the moods of this poem and the response of the artistry to them may content others I do

not know; I guess, however, that no MIDLAND reader will find what follows wholly unrewarding.

The tensile strength of the poem proves adequate to such situations as this:

Until, appalled at loss succeeding loss,  
I kneeled with wringing hands and eyeballs hot  
Unto that God I knew existed not.

The theme of these lines is more fully interpreted in a series of stanzas that must be the last accessible to readers at this time. Sometime, when the poet gives permission, the poem may be read as a whole. Its structure will be found firm and beautiful.

Under the trees I sat, under the blue  
Midsummer morning; under the quiet trees,  
Under the twilight, under the little breeze  
That scarcely dipped along the hillside dew;  
Day after day I sat, to hear some few  
Whisperings of the Comforter, and these  
My words, with hands clasping my folded knees:  
"Knock, and it shall be opened unto you."  
My heart, my broken heart, was ready, ready  
My utmost soul (that might no longer talk),  
Ready for God, still as a leaf grown steady  
After the tempest on a shivered stalk:  
I made God's test, in all good faith I made it; —  
Is there a God? — if so, then he betrayed it.

I made the test in God's own Laboratory  
(If sages speak the truth), with each appliance  
Perfect in its adjustment; and my Science  
Showed no results: there shone no inward glory,  
There flooded me no dominant control,  
No truth, no peace that passeth understanding;  
Until at last, as ship that makes its landing,  
I anchored on its native shore my soul,  
Knowing this, this: for *me* no Comforter  
From Otherwhere, for *me* salvation none,



Save such as by stern action might be won  
 Among things round me; I said: "It horror were  
 In *such* a world, were Foresight at the wheel" —  
 I said: "'Ich lass den Herrgott aus dem Spiel.'" "

I *could* not have beat back my way to life,  
 Inch after inch, with lacerated shins,  
 Through thorns and rocks, whilst mocked the Harle-  
       quins,

The monstrous midnight shapes of dancing Strife,  
 Had I still thought, "The Lord is lord of all." —  
 'T had been too ghastly; but I got good grip  
 On savior-energy of sportsmanship,  
 And heard far off Humanity to call  
 Me to its service. Thus I *would* not die.  
 And trained the shattered body back to speed,  
 And back to strength. (Run with me, if you will,  
 Young athletes — I'll outstrip you to the hill!) —  
 And trained the mind still forward to the High,  
 The Keen, the Firm! (And let who should, take heed!)

Ere this, had I abandoned holy house  
 Of Holy Church, with organ, cross, and book, —  
 As some dim cob-webbed hunting-lodge forsook  
 Not yet of bat and wasp, though of the mouse  
 And eager hound; and now that mystic Union  
 With Love Divine, as Brahma, Logos, God, —  
 Preached by the prophets of a World-communion —  
 Failed me the same, whatever path I trod,  
 Whatever tree I sate me by. . . . I guess  
 Ye grieve at such conclusion, saying: "So,  
 In vain he suffered all the long distress,  
 For vain his wisdom from his overthrow." —  
 Spare me (who've been with life) such platitude —  
 Even I have spelt new meanings for my good,

Like one who solves some curious alphabet  
 Upon a desert stele . . . . But perhaps  
 I am too near the tempests of collapse  
 To tongue their awful intimacies yet  
 For the articulate world . . . . And if I grow  
 By suffering, where is she? . . . . And shall we meet

Somewhere again along the Cosmic Flow,  
I and the woman of the winding-sheet! —  
All proofs and guesses of ten thousand years  
Never have dried one orphaned heart its tears:  
I have no proof and but a shadow-guess,  
And yet I've never wept. . . . But should we meet,  
Would *she* still know me after my distress,  
Would *I* still find the words wherewith to greet!

Like one who solves some curious alphabet  
On desert stele . . . and then solves a word . . .  
Though the God's whispering I never heard,  
And though my eyes were cruelly unwet  
(Harshly encountering so much to do),  
I know how ineradically absurd  
That Man is but a function of the Two,  
Physics and Chemistry — that we can spell  
By atom and motion (or by twitch and cell)  
The ineffable Adventure I've been through. . . .  
I know Love, Pain, and Power are spirit-things,  
My Act a more than Mine or Now or Near:  
One with the Will that suffers, conquers, sings,  
I was the mystic Voice I could not hear.

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### BRIEF REVIEWS

*Body of this Death*, by LOUISE BOGAN. (McBride, \$1.50). I am filled with a quiet enthusiasm for this little book: there is so much of sheer competence in it, of consummate craftsmanship, and such strength of reticent emotion. Possibly the beautiful printing has something to do with my enjoyment, for I exult in the appearance of these carefully designed pages with their red and black. But no typography could much enhance the appeal of such poems as "Words for Departure" and "A Letter" — in which I believe Miss Bogan speaks most richly and clearly in her own right. I shall watch for her next book. *Body of this Death* is a thing of assured beauty.

J. T. F.

*The A B C of Atoms*, by BERTRAND RUSSELL. (Dutton, \$2.00). I have read this book with keen interest in the material, and with enjoyment of the triumph of Bertrand Russell in making that material comprehensible to a layman. I do not know how satisfactory a physicist would find this presentation of present-day theories, but I suspect that it is as nearly adequate as the limitations of general readers will permit. There is no offensive "popularization" in *The A B C of Atoms*, however. It is merely a frank statement of what most thinking men want to know, in terms that they can understand. I believe other readers of THE MIDLAND will be grateful for the book, as I am.

J. T. F.

*Seeing the Middle West*, by JOHN T. FARIS. (Lippincott, \$5.00). Judging from the list of travel books to his credit, Mr. John T. Faris must be a professional enthusiast. From his latest opus it is easy to see that when enthusiasm becomes a profession it ceases to be a convincing virtue. Certainly the would-be traveler, after being dragged hither and yon through this "rich beautiful land, past gems of nature's architecture", "bonanza farms", "pleasant prairie flowers", "innumerable creeks and rivulets meandering through rich pasturages", and "even more majestic manifestations of nature's lavish attractions", may conceivably prefer to stay at home and travel by way of railroad folders, government bulletins, and chamber of commerce pamphlets, from whose pages most of this book's illustrations are taken. To the hardy soul who tries this book let me recommend a good map and a taste for inspired prose, a gem of which I append:

"Around a bend from Shakopee Chaska smiles on the valley as it affords a glimpse into the home life of these same Indians. 'Chaska' was the name given by the Sioux to a first-born child if that child was a son. Unfortunately, however, these warriors did not take much time for association with first-born sons or any other sons, until they were old enough to go on the war path that interrupted their home life as periodically as the sandstone ledges cross the channel of the Minnesota, interrupting its flow, causing rapids in time of low water that add greatly to the beauty of the river, though they are an effective bar to navigation."

E. P. F.

*On the Trail of Stevenson*, by CLAYTON HAMILTON. (Doubleday, Page, \$2.50). If I were more the Stevenson enthusiast, I might be able to find a valid reason for the existence of this book. As one who is scarcely a worshipper at the shrines which are described, I read with an uneasy consciousness that I am listening to a member of the National Institute of Arts and Letters, and with the conviction that he is half pedantic and half oracular. The drawings by Walter Hale, though not exciting, are the best part of the book. The format of the present edition presents a curious compromise: large and handsome type with skimmed margins, and admirable drawings very imperfectly reproduced.

J. T. F.

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### CONTRIBUTORS TO THIS ISSUE

WILLIAM ELLERY LEONARD has been a contributor to earlier volumes of THE MIDLAND, and to other literary magazines. He is professor of English at the University of Wisconsin. He is the translator (in verse) of Lucretius and Beowulf; author of several volumes of verse (*The Vaunt of Man*, *The Lynching Bee*, etc.), of humorous fables in rhyme (*Aesop and Hyssop*), of prose dramas on the American Indian (*Glory of the Morning*, *Red Bird*), of studies in two ancient personalities (Jesus, Socrates), and of monographs, critical articles, and literary and historical studies. The best of his recent verse, yet uncollected, has appeared in *The Nation* and in *Poetry*.

ROLAND ENGLISH HARTLEY is a young writer whose home is at Berkeley, California. He contributed the story, *The Battleground*, to THE MIDLAND for November, 1923.

GWENDOLEN HASTE has been a frequent contributor to THE MIDLAND, and her work has appeared in *Poetry*, *The Nation*, *The Century*, and other magazines. Montana has been her home for several years and is the background of most of her work. She is at present in New York City.

LIDA PATRICK WILSON lives at Omaha, Nebraska.

JOSEPHINE SPURGEON is a young writer of Decatur, Illinois.

LEONARD LANSON CLINE has contributed poems to the January and April issues of THE MIDLAND for this year.

MELVIN VAN DEN BARK is an instructor in English at the State University of Iowa. He is a graduate of the University of Nebraska.

